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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, October 21

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

October 22, 2008

09:15

Had a telephone conversation with President Bush at the Kantei in the presence of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura, Deputy Foreign Minister Kono, North American Affairs Bureau Director-General Nishimiya, and Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs Shinohara.

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09:44

Visited the Global Warming Countermeasures Headquarters. Afterward attended a cabinet meeting.

10:25

Met Finance Minister Nakagawa, Vice Finance Minister Sugimoto, and Budget Bureau Director-General Tango.

11:34

Met Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka.

12:49

Attended a Lower House members' meeting held in the Diet building.

13:02

Attended a Lower House plenary session.

14:25

Met LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Oshima. Afterward attended an LDP Women's Bureau executive meeting. Afterward attended a photo shoot session.

15:39

Met at the Kantei Shinohara, Foreign Policy Bureau Director-General Bessho and others in the presence of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsumoto. Afterward met deputy foreign ministers Sasae and Kono and Ambassador to India Domichi.

16:39

Met the Asian Clay Shooting Federation chairman and others.

17:00

Met Japan Business Federation Honorary Chairman Okuda, Chairman Mitarai, Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Okamura, Tokyo Electric Power Co. President Katsumata, Nippon Steel Corp. Chairman Mimura and Others in the presence of METI Minister Nikai, Environment Minister Saito and others.

17:46

Met the international peace unit to Sudan.

18:01

Attended a ceremony to hand commemorative gifts to Beijing Paralympics medal winners and a photo shoot, followed a discussion.

19:37

Met advisor Yamaguchi.

20:06

Met acquaintances at a restaurant in Akasaka.

21:29

Dined with his secretary at an ANA Intercontinental Tokyo restaurant.

22:47

Returned to his private residence in Kamiyama.

4) Refueling extension bill clears lower chamber

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)

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October 22, 2008

A bill amending the new Antiterrorism Special Measures Law to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean for another year cleared the House of Representatives in its plenary sitting yesterday with a majority of votes from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner, the New Komeito. The bill has now been sent to the House of Councillors. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) and other opposition parties, including the Japanese Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the People's New Party, voted against the legislation. The House of Councillors will hear a government explanation of the bill in its plenary sitting this morning and will enter into deliberations on it. The bill will likely be voted down in a plenary session of the opposition-controlled House of Councillors on Oct. 29, and after that the bill is expected to pass the House of Representatives in a second vote that will override the upper chamber's decision.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives also took a vote in its plenary sitting yesterday on the DPJ's counterproposal of a terrorism eradication bill. The DPJ-proposed bill is intended to send the Self-Defense Forces after a conflict cessation accord is reached in Afghanistan. However, it was voted down with a majority of votes from the ruling coalition, the JCP, and the SDP.

The MSDF refueling mission in the Indian Ocean was suspended last fall for a while because the Diet's deliberations on the legislation to extend it were protracted against the backdrop of the Diet's divided situation. This time, however, the bill cleared the House of Representatives after actual deliberations for only two days. The government and the ruling parties have now taken a step forward to continue the refueling activities under the current law that is to expire Jan. 15 next year.

Meanwhile, the DPJ—which is the largest of all political parties in the opposition-dominated House of Councillors—is calling for dissolving the House of Representatives at an early date as a precondition for fast-tracking a vote on the new antiterror legislation.

5) SDF officers to leave for Sudan on Oct. 24

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)

October 22, 2008

The government decided yesterday to send two Self-Defense Forces officers to the headquarters of the United Nations Mission in Sudan for U.N. peacekeeping operations in the southern part of Sudan. The two SDF officers, who will leave Japan on Oct. 24, will serve as a logistics staff officer to coordinate military supplies and as an intelligence staff officer to control databases.

6) Use of weapons on high seas constitutional

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)

October 22, 2008

The government made a cabinet decision yesterday to adopt a written statement regarding the use of weapons by Japan Coast Guard officials against pirates or suspicious vessels of unknown nationality in international waters. It goes: "In the case of

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vessels bearing no national flag, using weapons to crack down on crimes under Japan's laws and ordinances is not a problem in the

light of international law. This does not fall under the use of armed force prohibited in Article 9 of the Constitution." This is a reply to the prospectus of a Diet interpellation posed by Akihisa Nagashima, a House of Representatives member of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto).

7) U.S. informally asks Australia to shoulder Japan's share of heavy oil aid to North Korea

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
October 22, 2008

Akiko Horiyama, Seoul

The United States has informally asked the six-party members to let Australia shoulder Japan's share of 200,000 tons of heavy fuel it has yet to implement due to the abduction issue, a U.S.-ROK talks source in Seoul revealed on Oct. 21. The six parties are in an agreement to extend energy aid to the North in return for the disablement of its nuclear facilities. The option is said to have emerged in the U.S. government to use Australia, a major U.S. ally, as a strategic concept with an eye on the discussion to forge an East Asian security cooperative regime at the stage of nuclear abolishment. The matter is likely to escalate into a debate on expanding the framework of the six-party talks.

Besides Australia, New Zealand and the European Union (EU) have expressed willingness to join the energy aid in return for the disablement since the six countries reached the agreement in February 2007 on first-stage measures.

According to the U.S.-ROK negotiations source, North Korea expects the EU excluding France to join the aid effort because the North has diplomatic ties with it. The United States, on the other hand, supports participation by Australia, which can make strategic arguments in collaboration with the United States, while keeping in mind the discussion on a future regional security system. Multiple countries are expected to take part in providing the aid in the end. There is a possibility that Australia will play a role beyond being a mere aid participant.

A South Korean Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry official explained on Oct. 21 about a country extending aid in place of Japan: "The talks are still at an initial stage, and no country has been picked formally." The source also expressed a cautious view about expanding the framework of the six-party talks, saying: "The members are negative about the possibility of turning the framework into talks among seven to eight countries."

8) Government announces its decision to consider assisting North Korea's denuclearization

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 22, 2008

The government on October 21 conveyed at a joint meeting of the LDP's foreign affairs-related divisions held at the party headquarters its decision to start considering providing funds and technologies needed for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programs. Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura also revealed the

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plan at a news conference held the same day. Some participants in the joint meeting called for a prudent approach with one saying, "Japan could send a wrong message that it gives money without winning concessions from North Korea."

In the meantime, concerning energy aid to North Korea in return for its dismantling its nuclear weapons (Japan's share is 200,000 tons of heavy oil), in which Japan will not take part unless there is progress in abductions cases involving Japanese nationals, the U.S. has indicated a stance of accepting an offer for such aid from countries other than the six-party talks member nations. Australia and New Zealand are among the candidate countries.

9) Government considering providing funds for third phase of North

Korea denuclearization

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
October 22, 2008

The government has begun discussions on providing funds and technology in connection with nuclear abolition, a major agenda item in the third phase of the six-party talks on North Korea's denuclearization. Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone said in a press conference yesterday: "We have made contributions through the International Atomic Energy Agency. We will discuss with countries connected with the six-party talks how we can contribute to the abolishment of North Korea's nuclear programs."

Japan has rejected energy aid corresponding to 200,000 tons of heavy oil to North Korea, citing a lack of progress on the abduction issue. The government has also begun an effort with countries concerned, including the United States, to have Australia, New Zealand, and some European countries shoulder Japan's share of energy aid. With assistance to nuclear abolishment defined as an alternative to energy aid, the government's response has been determined in outline.

Specifically, the government is considering bearing the cost of removing the fuel rods from nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and extracted plutonium and demolishing the nuclear facilities, including nuclear reactors.

In energy aid, Australia and New Zealand have informed Japan that they would provide 10 million dollars (approximately 1 billion yen) each, which corresponds to over 30,000 tons of heavy fuel in total.

Coordination is also underway with such countries as Britain. If that is not enough, the United States and South Korea will also consider making contributions.

10) Government to provide Georgia with 20 billion yen in aid

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
October 22, 2008

The government will announce today in a meeting on support for Georgia, hosted by the European Union and the World Bank, its assistance measures for that country totaling approximately 200 million dollars (20 billion yen). Most of the assistance will be provided in yen loans. Japan's aid will be used to revitalize regional economies and improve roads damaged by the conflict with Russia in August.

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Japan will provide Georgia with its first yen loan package in 10 years. The loans will likely total 19 billion yen, nearly four times of the accumulated total of 5.3 billion yen provided to that country so far.

Projects subject to the yen loans include the road improvement plan, which is called "East-West Corridor" (length of 370 kilometers) linking between Azerbaijan, located on the coast of the Caspian Sea, and the Black Sea. The road reportedly is absolutely necessary to transport commodities to South Ossetia, which was devastated by the conflict.

11) Japan, China, South Korea to set up organization in November to discuss system of monitoring financial institutions

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
October 22, 2008

In an effort to stabilize money markets in Asia, monetary authorities of Japan, China, and South Korea will establish a new body to discuss a system to monitor financial institutions and information disclosure, according to informed sources yesterday. The three countries aim to set up an Asian-version Financial Stabilization Forum (FSF) composed of the countries participating in meetings of the Group of Seven (G-7) finance ministers and central

bank governors. They will also call on Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries to join the group. The first meeting is expected to occur in Tokyo in November to discuss specific measures to contain the adverse effect of the ongoing global financial crisis on the Asian economy.

China and South Korea responded to Japan's proposal for establishing a new consultative organ. The new organ calls itself "the workshop to stabilize the macro economy and the financial system" (the Asian-version FSF). Representatives from the three countries' finance ministries, central banks, and financial supervisory offices will meet on a regular basis. Participants are expected to discuss a system to monitor financial institutions' internal supervision systems designed to grasp the level of the soundness of finances, the state of loans, and investment risk.

The Asian economy has continued to grow rapidly, but the global financial crisis triggered by the U.S. has driven stock prices down, resulting in affecting the real economy. Given this, Japan, China, and South Korea judged it necessary to hammer out Asia's own measures to stabilize the financial system, separately from the G-7 framework.

Japanese mega-banks, as well as life and non-life insurance companies have also accelerated moves to establish local subsidiaries mainly in China and Southeast Asian countries and to go into partnership with local firms. For Japanese financial institutions that have placed more emphasis on business in Asia, efforts to stabilize Asia's financial system are becoming more important.

The Asia-version FSF is expected to issue positive proposals on such details as the monitoring of financial institutions and the transparency of information disclosure, as the same way as being done by the FSF since it was established in 1999.

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12) Japan-China-South Korea summit: Prime minister sounds out possibility of holding it in December, creating stir

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
October 22, 2008

Mainichi Shimbun on October 21 learned that Prime Minister Taro Aso had sounded out China and South Korea about the possibility of holding the envisaged Japan-China-South Korea summit in Fukuoka City in December. A senior Foreign Ministry official stressed that holding such a summit before year's end had been a pending issue since the previous Fukuda administration. However, if it is to be held in early December, it could clash with the political agenda if a Lower House election is held on November 30. Some are, therefore, puzzled, unable to determine the true reason for the prime minister's eagerness to hold the summit then.

Aso on the evening of the 21st indicated a desire to hold the summit before year's end, saying, "The trilateral summit must be held before the end of the year." He made that statement in front of reporters at the Kantei. The three countries agreed to hold trilateral talks once a year, apart from international conferences. Japan is to host the first meeting. Though it was originally scheduled to be held in Japan on September 21, it was postponed on very short notice due to the resignation of former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

However, there has been strong concern in the Foreign Ministry that unless the meeting is held before the end of the year, it would become impossible for Japan to host the first meeting and should that occur, China and South Korea might seize the initiative. For this reason, senior Foreign Ministry officials have been pressing the prime minister since immediately after his inauguration on the need to host the summit.

In addition, following the emergence of the financial crisis, China and South Korea have also asked Japan to hold it before the end of the year. In response, the prime minister has started undertaking

coordination with the possibility of holding it in December. He appears to have been determined to set the date of the summit for December, even if this gives rise to speculation about the timing of Lower House dissolution.

In the event of the summit schedule being fixed for early December, concern that it may be impossible to hold a Lower House election on November 30 is bound to mount.

13) DPJ to cooperate with ruling parties up to amendment to new antiterrorism law; Determined to stage battle over financial functions strengthening law

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
October 22, 2008

The DPJ on October 21 held a senior staff meeting, joined by President Ozawa, Secretary General Hatoyama and others, at the party headquarters. Participants confirmed that the party would not impede passage of a bill amending the new Antiterrorism Law to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission but would then switch to a confrontational stance in the Diet, if Prime Minister Aso puts off dissolution of the Lower House. The party is considering staging a battle over a bill amending the Financial

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Function Early Strengthening Law, which the government will submit to the Diet on October 24.

Shizuka Kamei, deputy president of the People's New Party, in the Diet called on Hatoyama and Deputy President Kan to return to a confrontational stance over the bill amending the new antiterrorism law during Upper House deliberations. They replied that though the party would cooperate on the bill amending the new terrorism law, it has yet to decide what approach it would take after that. They also said that the party would remain quiet, but it would thoroughly oppose it if the government tries to adopt a second supplementary budget. Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka at a meeting of legislators on the 21st emphatically said, "When the Lower House will be dissolved is very unclear. We want to make a response, after carefully determining the situation."

Concerning a bill amending the Financial Functions Early Strengthening Law, the DPJ sought to check the ruling camp, noting, "It is not necessary to cooperate with the ruling parties, if there is no dissolution of the Lower House." It is also opposing the easing of requirements for injecting public money into financial institutions, insisting that it is not possible to inject tax payers' money without questioning the management responsibility of troubled financial institutions. Some, however, take the stance that if the DPJ opposes, it could give an excuse for the government to put off Lower House dissolution.

14) DPJ hints at showdown over financial bill

ASAHI (Page4) (Abridged)
October 22, 2008

The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) is assuming a strong stand against the government and the ruling parties over their plan to introduce a new legislative measure intended to strengthen the functions of financial institutions. The DPJ was willing to cooperate on expediting the financial bill's passage through the Diet in order to urge Prime Minister Aso to dissolve the House of Representatives at an early date. In the Diet, however, many surmise that the prime minister will likely put off his decision on Diet dissolution. The DPJ is therefore reacting negatively. The DPJ will make a decision on its attitude after finding out the prime minister's intent and the government bill's contents.

The DPJ held a meeting of its executives for Diet affairs in the House of Representatives yesterday morning, in which they discussed a reported plan of the government. In its plan, the government reportedly will not jack up the management of publicly funded financial institutions. This point came under fire in the DPJ

meeting. "That's out of the question," one of the participants there said. "The ruling parties are making a big mistake if they think the bill will go through on the nod," he added.

Meanwhile, there was a meeting of directors from the House of Representatives Committee on Financial Affairs yesterday afternoon. In that meeting as well, the DPJ rejected the government's offer to explain the bill. "That's all right after a cabinet decision (on the bill)," a committee director of the DPJ said in the meeting. Furthermore, the DPJ took up the government's planned capital injections into the Norinchukin Bank, a banking institution mainly for farmers. In this regard, the DPJ noted that agricultural

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cooperatives stand behind the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. "If the bill is biased to one single party," the DPJ warned, "we will revise it in the House of Councillors."

The current relevant law came into effect four years ago. At that time, the DPJ voted against its enactment, claiming that it does not sufficiently pursue the responsibilities of management. This time, the DPJ was ready to cooperate to have the bill clear the Diet as early as possible with countermeasures incorporated for credit crunch. However, the DPJ was increasingly concerned that the government and the ruling coalition might exploit such a cooperative stance of the DPJ to pass a number of bills. "They could overdo something they have," a DPJ executive said.

DPJ President Ozawa and other party executives met yesterday at once and then confirmed that the DPJ would make its judgment after the government has formally presented its draft bill. One DPJ executive said, "If there is no definite promise to dissolve the Diet, we will deliberate on the bill in a thoroughgoing way." So saying, he implied that the DPJ could change its tactics, depending on what will happen to its call for an early dissolution of the Diet.

15) DPJ alarmed by possible postponement of Lower House dissolution; cautious view about supporting bill to strengthen financial functions

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 22, 2008

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the largest opposition party, is moving to constrain the ruling coalition in its Diet measures, worried about the possibility that the dissolution of the House of Representatives and a snap election is being put off. The DPJ has been preparing for a general election, with late November in mind. However, when the election will be held is uncertain because Prime Minister Taro Aso plans overseas travel. The largest opposition party has begun to put pressure on the ruling camp in an attempt to force an early dissolution of the Lower House, hinting of the possibility of changing its policy of cooperating to enact a bill amending the law to strengthen the financial system.

DPJ Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka said yesterday in a meeting of the party's Lower House members: "Dissolution of the Lower House remains an extremely uncertainty. We would like to respond while watching the situation." Yamaoka indicated in his remarks that the DPJ's scenario of Lower House being dissolved before the end of October for a snap election in late November might crumble. Yamaoka hinted at taking a cautious stance toward the handling of the bill amending the law to strengthen the financial system's functions, saying: "We will consider our response after seeing the contents of the bill."

Many in the DPJ now assume that Prime Minister Aso is planning on staying in office, since he has expressed strong desire to attend an emergency summit meeting to be held in the United States in November.

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa met yesterday at party headquarters with Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, Upper House Chairman Azuma Koshiishi and other officials. Yamaoka referred to the possibility of the postponement of Lower House dissolution. Koshiishi stressed: "We will not change our policy for this month." The DPJ executives

confirmed that the party would quickly vote down as planned a bill to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean.

Ozawa intends to accelerate preparations for the forthcoming election. At DPJ headquarters, he gave words of encouragements to candidates endorsed by the party. He told them: "We have not choice but to do our best with Nov. 30 election in mind. Since you have not enough time, you must deliver at least 50 outdoor speeches a day altogether."

16) Prime Minister Aso has tightly packed diplomatic schedule

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
October 22, 2008

Although there is a rumor that the House of Representatives will be dissolved in November for a snap election, Prime Minister Taro Aso has a tightly packed diplomatic schedule during that timeframe. Aso yesterday told U.S. President George W. Bush on the phone that he would attend the emergency summit of the leaders of the Group of Eight (G-8) possibly in November in the United States to discuss a response to the global financial crisis. It has been announced that Aso will visit Beijing on Oct. 23-25 to attend the summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). It has also been revealed that Aso sounded out China and South Korea on holding a trilateral summit in early December in Fukuoka.

The Aso-Bush telephone conversation was held on the morning of Oct. 21. Aso told Bush: "Japan as chair of the G-8 summit needs to fulfill the necessary leadership." Aso will meet with the top leaders of China and South Korea on Oct. 24 for the first time since he took office. The annual summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC), which successive prime ministers attended, will take place in Lima Peru on Nov. 22-23. Aso plans to hold a trilateral summit of Japan, China and South Korea in his hometown Fukuoka on Dec. 6-7. In addition, the government is considering Aso's attendance to the East Asia Summit, which will be held on Dec. 17.

SCHIEFFER